

*Health Information for Hazardous Waste Sites***Ashland/Northern States Power Lakefront Site**City of Ashland, Wisconsin
Update - September 2004

Health Concerns Summary: People who contact oily slicks on the surface of Lake Superior along the site may develop skin or eye irritation. If people inhale odors from evaporating wastes from a former manufactured gas plant undergoing cleanup, (MGP) they may develop headaches, feel dizzy or feel sick to their stomach. People are unlikely to eat harmful levels of site chemicals in fish from Chequamegon Bay, which is part of Lake Superior. People should continue to follow the general Lake Superior fish consumption advice (available from the Ashland County Health Department). People can safely use the beach and boat ramp in Kreher park.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH) is assessing this site's present and future threat to public health. This fact sheet summarizes the Division's conclusions and recommendations, which are based on data collected from the Department of Natural Resources and Xcel Energy. (Recommendations appear in italics)



The Ashland/Northern States Power site is several properties within the City of Ashland, and about 10 acres of sediment and surface water of Chequamegon Bay. The site is contaminated with manufactured gas plant (MGP) wastes. Refer to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fact sheet "A History of the Ashland/Northern States Power Lakefront Site" for the history and description of the site, including past and current investigative activities (DNR Publication RR-645).

PROBLEM SUMMARY**MGP Waste Contains Hazardous Chemicals**

MGP waste is made of a mixture of chemicals. The most harmful chemicals are in classes called polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Certain PAHs and VOCs increase a person's risk of cancer if they are in contact with high levels over a long time (like in a work setting). When sensitive people are exposed to PAHs they report skin irritation, eye irritation, headaches, dizziness and nausea. None of the MGP chemicals are likely to build up in the food chain by being passed from one animal to another.

When MGP wastes are buried, the chemicals may remain unchanged for many years. However, as the wastes are disturbed, some of the chemicals dissolve in water or disperse into air.

Current Site Conditions

If you walk along the shore at Kreher park you will notice small black particles washing into the rocks. Those are wood chips that have darkened with age. Wood chips between the boat ramp and the marina may contain MGP wastes. Wood chips in other parts of the park do not contain chemicals. Waste chemicals continue to enter the water of Chequamegon Bay.

The DNR has posted warning signs along the shore and in the water. Boat owners should not anchor inside this area because their anchor disturbs the waste sending oily slicks to the surface of the water.

**HEALTH CONCERNS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

People might come in contact with MGP waste and contaminated water in a number of ways. A person could contact chemicals at the seep. A person could also contact chemicals in oily slicks as they swim, wade, fish or moor their boat (in the restricted zone) at Kreher park.

Contact with oily slicks may cause eye or skin irritation. Contact may also cause photosensitivity, which could result in an increased risk of sunburn. If people get the oily substance on their skin, they should wash the skin right away with soap and water. If their eyes are affected, they should flush their eyes with water. *The selected*

cleanup should eliminate human exposure to chemicals in sediments and water. People should avoid swimming and wading in the restricted zone.

People do not use groundwater from the area of Kreher park as their primary source of drinking water. Ashland residents have a municipal water supply that provides safe drinking water and comes from much further out in Chequamegon Bay. The two artesian wells in Kreher Park have also provided clean and safe drinking water, but are located very close to contaminants and were closed as a precautionary measure.

Recent fish sampling from Chequamegon Bay indicates that fish do not contain levels of site-related chemicals that are a health concern. *However, people should continue to follow fish consumption advice for Lake Superior.* Recommendations are found in the booklet, "Important Health Information for People Eating Fish from Wisconsin Waters" which is available from the Ashland County Health Department.

MGP waste chemicals evaporate when they contact air (like at the seep) and many of the chemicals have strong odors. When sensitive people inhale MGP waste chemicals, they report headaches, dizziness and nausea. *Contractors should carefully control odors during cleanup activities.*

Future Public Health Activities

The Ashland County Health Department and we at the Wisconsin Division of Public Health will continue to work on this problem. We will review sampling information, talk to concerned residents, meet with other agencies and make recommendations. We are available to discuss your health concerns.

RESOURCES

If you think you may be sick from site chemicals, contact your doctor. Explain your situation and how you may have been exposed. Doctors are welcome to contact either the Ashland County or State health departments for more information about this site.

Contacts

Ashland County Health Department
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Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services
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DNR Northern Regional Office
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EPA, Region 5
Bri Bill, Community Involvement Coordinator
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For More Information

To see official documents and records for this site, visit the:

Vaughn Public Library
502 W. Main Street Ashland, WI 54806
For hours call: (715) 682-7060

Bad River Public Tribal Library
100 Maple St., Odanah, WI, 54861
For hours call: (715) 682-7111 ext. 1532

Red Cliff Public Library
88385 Pike Rd., Hwy 13, Bayfield, WI, 54814,
For hours call: 715-779-3700

Web Sites

DNR – <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr/cleanup/ashland.html>
EPA –
<http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/npl/wisconsin/WIDSFN057952.htm>
DHFS – <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/eh/PHA/phaindex.htm>

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